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FM AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7169
INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 1519
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 1534
RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 1519
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 1497
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 1447
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 1474
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RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS 0867
RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE 8358

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 4/11/2016

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SUBJECT: TAJIKISTAN: IRPT SAYS RAHMONOV WILL USE LIBEL SUIT AS
BARGAINING CHIP

CLASSIFIED BY: Richard E. Hoagland, Ambassador, Embassy
Dushanbe, U.S. Department of State.
REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (C) Muhiddin Kabiri, the Deputy Chairman of the Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan (IRPT) told PolOff April 6 President Rahmonov likely will stop the lawsuit filed by Dushanbe Vodokanal against IRPT Chairman Said Abdullo Nuri closer to the election in November.

¶2. (U) Dushanbe Vodokanal, the Dushanbe water utility company, filed a suit against Nuri accusing him of libel. According to news reports, Behruz Safarov, the director of Dushanbe Vodokanal, accuses Nuri of defaming his company. In an article published in December, Nuri alluded to the company engaging in bribery, but Safarov insists Nuri has no proof. A district court in Dushanbe is reviewing the libel suit.

¶3. (C) Kabiri informed PolOff that Nuri is in Iran seeking medical treatment. Kabiri plans to discuss the suit with him this week either via telephone or in person in Iran to seek Nuri's instructions on next steps. The IRPT is not worried about the suit and dismisses it as frivolous. Kabiri predicts that Rahmonov will, at the last

minute, come
in to "save" the IRPT from the suit and have it dismissed prior
to the
November election. However, this will come at a price.
Rahmonov will
reportedly use this as a bargaining chip for Nuri to agree that
the IRPT
will not field a candidate to run against Rahmonov, or perhaps
even
convince the IRPT publicly and directly to support Rahmonov.

¶4. (C) COMMENT: Given Kabiri's forecast, it is not
inconceivable the
suit was planned by someone in Rahmonov's administration to give
Rahmonov this bargaining power with the IRPT. The IRPT is the
only
competing party with a real base. That said, it is unlikely that
Kabiri, or any other candidate, could effectively challenge
Rahmonov.
END COMMENT.
HOAGLAND